DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 474 781 PS 031 171

AUTHOR	Cadwell, Louise Boyd
TITLE	Bringing Learning to Life: The Reggio Approach to Early Childhood Education.
ISBN	ISBN-0-8077-4296-1
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	212p.; Foreword by Carlina Rinaldi.
AVAILABLE FROM	Teachers College Press, P.O. Box 20, Williston, VT 05495-0020 ($19.95). Tel: 800-575-6566 (Toll Free); Fax: 802-864-7626; Web site: http://www.teacherscollegepress.com.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available From EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrators; Classroom Environment; *Preschool Children; *Preschool Curriculum; Preschool Education; Reflective Teaching; *Reggio Emilia Approach; *Student Projects; Teacher Collaboration; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS	Italy (Reggio Emilia); Missouri (Saint Louis); Project Approach (Katz and Chard)

ABSTRACT

Increasingly, the innovative teaching approach of the preschools of Reggio Emilia, Italy, are being adapted to U.S. early childhood settings. This book describes the growth and evolution of the work in the St. Louis Reggio Collaborative over the past 10 years, addressing the fundamental principles of the Reggio approach as they are experienced in the daily life of three American schools that have attained a very high level of understanding and practice. Following a prologue presenting a history of Reggio Emilia and describing the ideas integral to the Reggio approach, the book is organized into six chapters. A journal-style format is used to convey real-life classrooms between January and June in 2000, including details on the flow of the day, parent participation, teacher collaboration, the importance of the environment, documenting students' work, and assessment. Chapter 1 describes the phases of a day as seen from the perspective of the author as an "atelierista" or studio teacher. Chapter 2 focuses on partnerships with parents, including relationship-building with parents and forms and structures for parent participation. Chapter 3 concerns teacher collaboration and includes stories of challenges faced and discoveries made. Chapter 4 focuses on the transformation of the space in the "atelier" or studio. Chapter 5 illuminates the innate intelligence and creativity of young children through vignettes from student projects. Chapter 6 recounts the significant highlights of a week-long study tour in Reggio Emilia, illustrating connections with the work in St. Louis and the pull to construct stronger systems based on core values. The book's epilogue presents a dialogue among teachers revealing their current understanding of assessment and documentation as two different worldviews: analytical, reductionist, and decontextualized compared to holistic, dynamic, and relational. The book concludes by noting that in many ways, the St. Louis Reggio Collaborative, is trying to build bridges between these two ways of living life in school. (Contains 71 references.) (KB)

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